Re: Images for Surgeons: Digital Thermographic Photography (''Thermal Imaging'') for Preoperative Perforator Mapping

To the Editor:

Thank you for the opportunity to reply to the letter by de Weerd et al.[1]

"Images for Plastic Surgeons" is a section that in no way aims to claim originality of the concepts discussed. The section was introduced to capture the visual impact and variety of images that plastic surgeons may encounter in their everyday practice. It was not intended as a vehicle for case reports or an easy publication. In fact, the section is part of the broader journal subsection of "Circumspectus Medicinae," which has, from its outset, been an informal vehicle for provocative and new ideas or controversies, and recently images. In this same way, the most influential medical journal in the world publishes "Images in Clinical Medicine" on common topics such as basal cell carcinoma and NF.[2–4] We have not yet read a letter by Frederich von Recklinghausen aggravated by the lack of reference to his works in those images.

Most of the regular readers of plastic surgery journals will know about the pioneering work and efforts of de Weerd et al to get thermography accepted and routinely used as a modality in plastic surgery.[5–10] In fact, 3 of 4 papers of Dr. de Weerd included in his PhD thesis have been published in this journal. We would have hoped that the opportunity to further expose plastic surgeons to the technique of thermal imaging would have pleased the authors.[11] This was indeed our aim: to present an image that may have impact on clinical practice.

This short "Images in Plastic Surgery" piece must be taken in context, and is in no means an indication that our group first described the technique. To suggest that "the article can easily be interpreted as if the authors are the first in using digital thermography" is not the intent of the editorial basis of this feature. The manuscript was not a review article, or even an original article describing a "new technique." It was an interesting picture with an extended caption.

Lastly, a comment to the image itself that we published: although certainly not the *first* description of a new technique, we feel it was actually the first direct visual comparison of the gold standard for perforator imaging, computed tomographic angiography, and the technique of digital thermographic photography for the same purpose. The visual demonstration of concordance in localizing perforators had not been shown in any of the previous literature. We similarly invite other authors to contribute original images that may uniquely highlight an aspect of plastic surgery.

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Comment from Editor on the Letters of de Weerde et al and Chubb, et al

An article by Chubb et al has been the occasion for a letter of comment by de Weerd and a reply by the authors of the original paper, Drs. Chubb, Rozen, Whitaker, and Ashton.[1–3] The discussion between the correspondents reflects some possible misunderstandings arising from my editorial management of this section.

In collaboration with the Associate Editors, I have presided over the development of "Circumspectus Medicinae." This feature made its debut in 2008.[4] Conscious of the limitations of the journal's page budget, we were determined to make this section an innovative and valuable use of space. We included a variety of material in developing the section, including book and media reviews, descriptive reviews of courses and fellowships, original essays, and historical notes.[4,5] We hoped to make this section a flexible format for publishing items that did not fit the usual journal categories but that provided information and commentary from perspectives spread among many dimensions of plastic surgery.[6–8]

As an editorial group, we subsequently discussed adding an "Images" feature to the section. This idea is a derivative one, inspired by similar sections in such publications as the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*.[9,10] The idea was to present an interesting or provocative image with a short commentary. The format of the "Images" items would preclude presentation of original work or thorough reviews. As with other new features, the initial items were expected to come from editorial board members who promoted these

innovations in the hope that this would inspire other contributors.

Such is the context of the feature discussed by Dr de Weerd. Generally, I introduce new sections of the journal with a descriptive editorial.[11] I did not do so with "Images," and this omission may be the basis for uncertainty about the standards applicable to "Images" manuscripts.

Dr de Weerd's work is well-recognized by contributors known to me, and it is well represented by publication in the journal.[3] The "Images" articles may be considered as a testimonial to how generally these techniques are being explored. Dr de Weerd and his coworkers perhaps will increasingly experience growing anonymity related to their contributions as these contributions are more widely applied. In this case, however, I do apologize to them for any sense of neglect they may have felt by not being specifically cited in the article by Chubb et al.

William C. Lineaweaver, MD
Editor-in-Chief

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